

shifting more decisionmaking out of Washington back to States and local communities. As we move into the era of balanced budgets and smaller government, we must work in new ways to enable people to make the most of their own lives. We are helping America's communities not with more bureaucracy but with more opportunities.

Through our successful empowerment zones and community development banks, we are helping people to find jobs, to start businesses. And with tax incentives for companies that clean up abandoned industrial properties, we can bring jobs back to places that desperately, desperately need them. But there are some areas that the Federal Government should not leave and should address and address strongly.

One of these areas is the problem of illegal immigration. After years of neglect, this administration has taken a strong stand to stiffen the protection of our borders. We are increasing border controls by 50 percent. We are increasing inspections to prevent the hiring of illegal immigrants. And tonight I announce I will sign an executive order to deny Federal contracts to businesses that hire illegal immigrants.

Let me be very clear about this. We are still a nation of immigrants. We should be proud of it. We should honor every legal immigrant here working hard to be a good citizen, working hard to become a new citizen. But we are also a nation of laws.

I want to say a special word now to those who work for our Federal Government. Today the Federal work force is 200,000 employees smaller than it was the day I took office as President. Our Federal Government today is the smallest it has been in 30 years, and it is getting smaller every day. Most of our fellow Americans probably don't know that. There's a good reason, a good reason. The remaining Federal work force is composed of hard-working Americans who are now working harder and working smarter than ever before to make sure the quality of our services does not decline.

I would like to give you one example. His name is Richard Dean. He is a 49-year-old Vietnam veteran who has worked for the Social Security Administration for 22 years now. Last year he was hard at work in the Federal building in Oklahoma City, when the blast killed 169 people and brought the rubble down all around him. He reentered that building four times. He saved the lives of three women. He is here with us this evening and I want to recognize Richard and applaud both his public service and his extraordinary personal heroism.

But Richard Dean's story doesn't end there. This last November, he was forced out of his office when the government shut down. And the second time the government shut down, he continued helping Social Security recipients, but he was working without pay.

On behalf of Richard Dean and his family and all the other people who are out there working every day doing a good job for the American people, I challenge all of you in this Chamber, never, ever shut the Federal Government down again.

On behalf of all Americans, especially those who need their Social Security payments at the beginning of March, I also challenge the Congress to preserve the full faith and credit of the United States, to honor the obligations of this great nation as we have for 220 years, to rise above partisanship and pass a straightforward extension of the debt limit and show the people America keeps its word.

I know that this evening I have asked a lot of Congress and even more from America, but I am confident. When Americans work together in their homes, their schools, their churches and synagogues, their civic groups, their workplace, they can meet any challenge.

I say again, the era of big government is over, but we can't go back to the era of fending for yourself. We have to go forward to the era of working together as a community, as a team, as one America, with all of us reaching across these lines that divide us, the division, the discrimination, the rancor, we have to reach across it to find common ground. We have got to work together, if we want America to work.

I want you to meet two more people tonight who do just that. Lucius Wright is a teacher in the Jackson, Mississippi public school system. A Vietnam veteran, he has created groups to help inner city children turn away from gangs and build futures they can believe in.

Sergeant Jennifer Rogers is a police officer in Oklahoma City. Like Richard Dean she helped to pull her fellow citizens out of the rubble and deal with that awful tragedy. She reminds us that in their response to that atrocity, the people of Oklahoma City lifted all of us with their basic sense of decency and community.

Lucius Wright and Jennifer Rogers are special Americans, and I have the honor to announce tonight that they are the very first of several thousand Americans who will be chosen to carry the Olympic torch on its long journey from Los Angeles to the centennial of the modern Olympics in Atlanta this summer, not because they are star athletes but because they are star citizens, community heroes meeting America's challenges. They are our real champions. Please stand up.

Now each of us must hold high the torch of citizenship in our own lives. None of us can finish the race alone. We can only achieve our destiny together, one hand, one generation, one American connecting to another.

There have always been things we could do together, dreams we could make real which we could never have done on our own. We Americans have forged our identity, our very union,

from the very point of view that we can accommodate every point on the planet, every different opinion. But we must be bound together by a faith more powerful than any doctrine that divides us, by our belief in progress, our love of liberty and our relentless search for common ground. America has always sought and always risen to every challenge.

Who would say that having come so far together we will not go forward from here? Who would say that this Age of Possibility is not for all Americans?

Our country is and always has been a great and good nation, but the best is yet to come, if we all do our part.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

At 10 o'clock and 13 minutes p.m. the President of the United States accompanied by the committee of escort retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The members of the President's Cabinet.

The Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

JOINT SESSION DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The Chair declares the joint meeting of the two Houses dissolved.

Accordingly, at 10 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m., the joint session of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ON THE STATE OF THE UNION

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I move that the message of the President be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered printed.

The motion was agreed to.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST THE CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 1124, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996

Mr. DIAZ-BALART, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 104-451) on the resolution (H. Res. 340) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (S. 1124) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1996 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes, which was referred to the